

Unknowns

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Unknowns

by [saiikavon](#)

Summary

Sometimes Lance shuts down. They don't know what it is or why, just that it's probably an effect of fighting against the Galra for so many years. Keith is there to support him, even though all he wants is an answer.

Notes

Kind of inspired by CamelotQueen's "The Memory of You is Killing Me" series. I had this idea before I read the series, these things I wanted to attach to Lance, but I worried before deciding to post this that it might be too similar. Regardless if it is too similar or not, I would feel remiss in not mentioning that series, which always strikes me to my core. If I capture here even half the feeling that fic gives me, I will be happy.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

It was three in the morning. The skillet was sizzling, and the smell of ground beef and herbs lingered in the kitchen. Keith carefully rolled the little potato balls over in the skillet, watching their color carefully and frowning in concentration. Next to him sat the grease-stained, wrinkled piece of paper that contained Elisa Espinosa's recipe for *papas rellenas*, that Keith still struggled to get right after two years of preparing Lance's favorite comfort food at ungodly hours of the morning. At least Lance never complained. If he was even capable, that is.

Lance wandered in right on schedule, just as Keith was laying out the finished snack on some paper towels. Lance was quiet, nothing save the shuffle of his feet to alert Keith to his presence. A

chair creaked on the tiled floor, and Keith glanced over his shoulder as his husband landed heavily in his seat, gaze weighted to the table, and expression completely empty.

“Hey, good morning.” Keith spoke softly. Lance didn’t even look up, but Keith didn’t expect an answer. He just quietly prepared Lance’s plate, then slid it over to him with a, “Give them a minute, they’re still hot.” Lance stared blankly.

It didn’t happen every night, but often enough, whatever this was. Keith learned to notice the onset of it, finding that it always started with Lance being unusually excited during the day, even for him. He’d grow quieter during the evening, then go to sleep early. After the high wore off, Keith guessed, Lance just shut down, leaving him tired and expressionless.

(They didn’t have a name for this, just symptoms with fragments of illnesses to attach it to. They tried five different doctors, all saying different things, recommending different treatments, and different medications. The first one gave him sleeping pills, but that just made Lance more depressed. The second one upped the dose, but it just made things worse. By the last doctor—who was sure Lance was bipolar—Keith was watching Lance throw up his dinner every night, hysterical and crying, *“I can’t do this anymore, I can’t, just fucking kill me, Keith, I don’t want to live like this.”* Keith didn’t like not having a clearly-defined answer; he kept thinking maybe one more doctor would have the solution, would give them the answer; but nothing was worth watching Lance suffer. That was the end of the doctors, and the medications. Never again.)

Eventually Lance started to eat, taking small bites and chewing carefully, as though part of him had forgotten how. Sometimes he stopped and stared off into space for a moment before continuing, his every movement mechanical and slow. The first few times, Keith wasn’t even sure if Lance could taste what he was eating, if the food helped at all, but he always cleared his plate, and always seemed grateful for it in the morning. Said it gave him something to focus on, while he was lost in his own head. Keith kept cooking for him.

He waited on the opposite side of the table, chin in hand, watching as Lance gradually cleared his plate. When he was done, he just sat with his hands folded in his lap, still staring blankly. Keith could only guess at what he was thinking. He reached across and took the plate.

“You still hungry?” Keith asked. Lance said nothing. “Lance, can you hear me?”

Lance was still for a moment longer, then he nodded. It was rare that he was completely unresponsive, thankfully, but more often than not he seemed to be unable to speak. Whatever the cause of that was, at least Keith could feel relieved that Lance wasn’t completely out of his reach.

“Do you want anything else to eat?”

Lance shook his head.

“Something to drink?”

There was another moment of stillness, then Lance nodded. Keith slid his phone over to Lance, and watched Lance’s long, slender fingers rise to carefully tap out a response: Keith looked it over, finding the word ‘juice’ following an emoji of an orange. Orange juice it is. Keith got Lance his drink, then turned to start cleaning up the dishes he’d created while cooking.

(Keith always felt better when things were clean. He supposed that was what he’d gotten out of the war, this sense that everything needed to be perfect, in its place. He became paranoid when something was out of order, like it meant something was waiting around the corner; as a result, the house was usually spotless. Lance’s...whatever it was had messed with him a lot, in the beginning,

but he'd been managing since he started figuring out how to predict it, and how to handle it. They had a system. It worked, and it was better than putting Lance through hell again. He could be okay with this. Mostly.)

He washed the skillet first, the biggest items always first, then put away in the cupboard below the sink. Then the smaller items, Lance's plate among them, all going to their respective places. He cleaned the sink meticulously, too, usually, but Lance still had his glass. He couldn't clean the sink until everything else was cleaned and put away. He settled himself to wait, only to find that Lance had finished his drink and stood to hand him the glass, still without a word or expression. Keith took the glass, letting Lance lean against his back, lean arms wrapped around his middle, while he finished cleaning.

(He didn't think Lance wanted anything, just to be near him. Lance had confessed to being scared sometimes, in this state, even when he couldn't show it. Being close to someone helped, so Keith tried not to stray far when Lance was like this, even taking him by the hand when he felt the need to leave the room.)

Finally, Keith touched Lance's arm, turning to look over his shoulder. "Ready to go back to bed?"

Lance shook his head.

"What if we just sat in bed and watched a movie? We can keep the lights on, you don't have to sleep if you're not ready."

There was a pause while Lance considered this. Then Keith heard a swallow, and Lance's voice rasped, muffled against Keith's shirt, "Okay."

Keith gave his arm another pat, and Lance let go, letting Keith thread their fingers together instead. They wandered back to the bedroom together in silence. Keith turned back the covers for Lance first, letting his husband slide into bed in that same slow, mechanical manner before moving to turn on the bedside lamps. He found something on the TV they could watch—nothing too deep, or intense; some dumb comedy usually worked best—and slid in next to Lance, settling close to his side. Keith kept one hand on Lance's, thumb gently rubbing across the back.

(Keith attempted to fill the silence, this space where Lance's usual jokes and commentary would be. It wasn't quite as fun as watching Lance wave his arms and roll his eyes at the characters on the screen, but Keith always felt it was his duty to try and keep things normal in these moments. To show Lance that it was okay, he didn't have to have energy all the time; he didn't have to carry everyone's hearts. Sometimes Keith wondered if that was part of the reason Lance shut down, because he made himself take on too much. But nothing Keith did outside of Lance's empty moments seemed to make a difference, so he supposed he was just searching for answers again. He should probably just let it be the way it is. Lance always said so.)

At some point, whatever was making Lance not want to sleep passed, and Keith felt his husband shift beside him, sliding further under the covers. "Sleeping now," he murmured, and Keith hummed in response, standing to turn the lights off. He kissed Lance's forehead.

"I love you. See you in the morning."

Lance hummed back, closing his eyes. Soon enough, Keith would slide down next to him, joining him in sleep.

(Sometimes Lance would wake up better, sometimes not; but it would wear off eventually, and there would be smiles and kisses, banter and teasing. He would find joy in it, comfort, familiarity;

even knowing the next empty moment could be just around the corner. Still, he would be there when Lance shut down again, always, cooking *papas rellenadas* at three in the morning and holding his hand, glad that he had Lance's hand to hold at all.)

End Notes

So, quick explanation, since I feel the need with such a touchy subject...this is somewhat personal. What both Keith and Lance suffer from are things I suffer from, and just as I described here, I have no explanations for them. Just symptoms and vague diagnoses that never seemed to fit right, medications that just made everything worse (seriously, this stuff seems so textbook, but doctors suck sometimes and sometimes no one can agree on what's going on inside someone's head). So there is no solid explanation here, just coping, trying to work with--as the title says--unknowns. I hope I conveyed that well enough.

Also Lance is Cuban, vague as the references to it might have been, and if I have misstepped in even those brief references, I apologize.

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